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ABSTRACT

This report updates a 1979 article from the Bay State Librarian about censorship in Massachusetts libraries from 1966 through 1975. Compiled using data from the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), the report provides information about censorship attempts and actions between 1976 and 1982. The definition of censorship in this report includes not only the attempt to suppress materials presenting certain viewpoints in the library or classroom, but also includes such institutions businesses, theatres, television stations, politics, and court decisions because these areas make up a significant number of censorship attempts reported to the OIF. From 1975 through 1982, 56 cases were reported, with 27 cases occurring in Boston, and the others distributed almost evenly among 24 other towns and cities. In educational institutions, censorship cases were most often initiated by school committees, parents, and administrators; in noneducational settings the majority of cases were initiated by the courts, state and local officials, and television stations. Censorship attacks were most commonly prompted by controversial ideas, obscenity, and political issues. Educational institutions were the most affected, with eight censorship attempts in primary schools, six in secondary schools, and one at a university. Non-educational institutions affected included advertisers (2), bookstores (2), broadcasting (4), church (1), clubs (1), community groups (1), prison (1), private home (1), court rulings (6), legislative rulings (3), government agencies (4), presses (5), publishers (3), and theaters (3). Of the 56 cases, 16 were successful, 10 were partially successful, 16 were unsuccessful, and 14 were of unknown status when reported. Seven tables summarize the findings. (36 references) (SD)

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Censorship in Massachusetts:

An Update

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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The Summer 1979 issue of the Bay State Librarian reported on "Censorship in Massachusetts Libraries". The article by L. B. woods, tabulated and analysed censorship attempts reported in the American Library Association's Newsletter On Intellectual Freedom for the years 1966 through 1975. The objective of this paper is to update the previous article to the year 1982 using much the same methods. Reported herein are (1) the number of censorship cases reported in the Newsletter from Massachusetts during the years 1976-82,(2) their locations,(3) sources of attempts, (4) reasons given by censors for attacks, (5) institutions affected, (6) objects under attack, and (7) the dispositions of the incidents.

The definition of censorship remains the same for this study: "The attempt to suppress materials presenting certain viewpoints, or to exclude those viewpoints from library and classroom materials" (1:17). For the 1979 article this was expanded to include such institutions as businesses, theaters, and TV stations (1:17). Here it must be expanded further to include politics and court descisions as they make up a significant number of the attempts reported.

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Presented in Table 1 is the number of censorship cases reported by year. Because the numbers vary so from year to year and between educational and non-educational institutions, it is difficult to perceive a pattern. It can be stated however, that the number of cases Reported in educational institutions remained at about half the number reported in non-educational institutions, as was evident in the 1966-75 study.

TABLE I

NUMBER OF CENSORSHIP CASES REPORTED

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Year	Cases	Year	Cases
1976	0	1976	8
1977	2	1977	2
1978	5	1978	4
1979	1	1979	5
1980	2	1980	5
1981	5	1981	5
1982	4	1982	8
Total:	19	Total:	37

The places of attacks are varied as shcwn in Table 2. Boston, living up to it's reputation, once again has over half the total number of attempts. But to be fair to Boston, this is due to the large number of state court cases on censorship that took place during the time period studied . As in the previous study, no other towns were singnificant contributors of censorship cases.

TABLE II
PLACES OF ATTACKS

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Boston	3	Boston	24
Buckland	1	Cambridge	1
Cambridge	1	Danvers	1
Chelsea	2	Edgertown	1
Dedham	1	Fall River	1
Hopkinton	1	Lenox	1
Ludlow	1	Lynn	1
New Bedford	1	Malden	1
Newton	1	Middlesex	1
North Adams	1	Norfalk	2
Pembroke	1	Springfeild	2
Scituate	1	Town not given	1
Waltham	2		
Westboro	1		
Town not given	1		

School Committees, Parents and Administrators were responsible for originating most censorship attempts within educational institutions, while Courts and Local and Government Officials were listed as being responsible for most non-educational attempts (as seen in Table 3).

TABLE III
SOURCES OF ATTEMPTS

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Mass. Civil Liberties Union	1	Community Groups	2
Department of Youth Services	1	Courts	11
Parents	5	Editor	1
Police	1	Government Officials	7
Public School Administration	3	Local Officials	8
School Committees	5	Police	2
University Administrations	3	Prison Officials	1
		Private Suites	2
		TV Stations	3

With the exception of a variety show and a student newspaper, all censorship attempts by Parents and School Committees concerned books. Other attempts on the public school level concerned individuals' rights to free expression and speech. On the University level, attempts were concerned with statements against the institution's basic values, and retaliation from the administration via fund freezing for the expression of certain views in student publications.

The main concern of courts and local and public officials surrounded the Freedom of Information Act. The most common conflict occurred between those who believed that information if made available would be an invasion of an individual's privacy and those who believed public disclosure was in the public's interest. In one case, taxpayers and the Massachusetts Fair Share Inc. wanted the names of persons who owed back taxes made public, feeling that taxpayers have the right to know if their neighbors are paying their fair share of the tax burden. Justice Ruth Abrams determined that public interest here outweighs an individual's right to privacy and therefore made the names available to the public (2:55). In another case, the FBI collected information on organized crime leader Raymond L. Patriarca's dealings with public officials. Newspapers felt they had the right to access these documents which had bearing on the honesty of public officials. It was determined however, that the access to information of public interest does not outweigh the FOIA's protection of an individual's privacy (3:55-6). To avoid future conflicts in the Freedomof Information Act, the FBI and

other law enforcement agencies sought exemption in FOIA from disclosure of records compiled for law enforcement purposes (4:82). It was not reported as this paper was written whether this ruling has gone into effect.

TABLE IV
REASONS FOR THE ATTACKS

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Controversial Ideas	5	Controvesial Ideas	2
Obscenity	2	Libel	1
Offensive	1	Nudity	2
Criticism	2	Obscenity	5
Political	3	Offensive	1
Profanity	1	Political	12
Religious	1	Public Interest	5
Unconstitutional	1	Racism	2
Vile	1	To uphold the law	3
Viclation of policy	1	Unconstitutional	1
Vicience	1	Violence	1
		Reason not given	2

The 1966-75 article indicated obscenity to be the major reason behind censorship attacks, with six cases repcrted for educational institutions and twenty-fcur for non-educatonal (1:19-20). As can be seen in Table 4, the top reasons for censorship in non-educational institutions include political reasons (number one), with obscenity and public interest tied for second. The reasons catagorized under the heading "Political" are varied. They include a ban to keep newspapers and magazines from publishing editorials without the full legal name of the author, several cases of witholding records that may endanger the national security, several cases dealing with the Freedom of Information Act, as well as a few cases involving the protection of an individual's privacy. In educational institutions controversial ideas lead, followed by political reasons, obscenity, and criticism (mostly from parents).

The three political reasons concerned the expression of viewspoints that appeared in student newspapers and broadcasts. The controversial ideas catagory included two cases concerning sex education and three cases of teachers concerned with freedom of expression in the classroom.

TABLE V
INSTITUTIONS AFFECTED

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Grammer Schools	8	Advertisors	2
High Schools	6	Bookstores	2
High School Publications	1	Broadcasting	4
Universities	1	Church	1
University Publications	3	Clubs	1
		Community Groups	1
		Prison	1
		Private Home	1
		Court Rulings	6
		Legislative Rulings	3
		Government Agencies	4
		Presses	5
		Publishers	3
		Theaters	3

Table 5 lists the institutions affected by censorship attacks. The non-educational institutions listed here differ from those of the previous study in that they are more political. Under the heading of "Court Rulings" are such things as the disclosure of public records and cameras in court. These and the items listed under "Legislative Rulings"and "Government Agencies" are closely related as are items listed under "Press". Most are concerned with the public's right to know, fair trial/free press and the protection of confidentiality. The fight against censorship is difficult when these areas are concerned. Although some people feel they have the right to access any information, this process may interfere with another's right to confidentiality. There exists the same controversy regarding the idea of free press/fair trial. Because of the common issues involved it was difficult to

categorize the data, as some cases could be categorized under more than one heading. Of the educational institutions affected, Chelsea High School Library was in the lime-light from 1977-79 leaving an important mark in the fight against censorship. The attack from Andrew P. Quigly, the school committee chairperson, owner and editor of the local paper and father of a Chelsea High student described a poem, "The City To a Young Girl" from the anthology Male and Female Under Eighteen as "objectional, salacious and obscene"(4:69). The Right to Read Foundation, Librarian Sonja Coleman, her collegues, and a few students fought a courageous battle. The Freedom to Read Foundation granted the Chelsea committee $2,500 in addition to $750 previously granted to help defray legal costs (5:28). The defense attorney argued "the narrow issue is theconstitutionality of a public body to censor purespeech...a poem by a young girl that expresses an idea in language not uncommon." Librarian Sonja Coleman felt the book to contain an "appropriate theme" that is "a common problem faced by all young women in our society" (6:4). In January 1979 it was reported that the censorship case was unsuccessful. The school committee was required to pay $27,300 in legal fees, protect Coleman's job, and most importantly, cease censorship (7:7). Sonja Coleman recieved the 1978 John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award from ALA's Intellectual Freedom Round Table "for

personal courage, professional integrity, and vigorous defense of the students' right to read while threatened with loss of position" (8:86). This was a great national victory against censorship, but after tasting victory Sonja Coleman resigned from her job. This resignation was viewed with alarm by some of the intellectual freedom advocates from the Freedom to Read Foundation who had voted money for this worthwhile cause. Aside from the Chelsea High School Library, there were no other reported censorship attempts against libraries, though it must be remembered that only about fifteen percent of cases are ever reported in the news media.

TABLE VI
TYPES OF MATERIALS UNDER ATTACK

Educational Institutions	Non-educational Institutions
Books (one each unless inicated)	Books
A fifth grade vocabulary book	Iranian books describing US and
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.	Isralie Intelligencs Operations
Native Son	Books on revolution
War on Villa Street	Show Me
Concepts in Biology	Newspapers/Magazines:
Our Bodies, Ourselves	Cuban magazines or newspapers
Male and Female Over Eighteen	The Grapevine
Dollars and Sense	unsigned editorials

Newspapers:
BU Exposure
Student Defender

Movies:
Deep Throat

Plays:
One Day In the Life Of Ivan Denisovich
Leopold-Loeb Murder Trial

Radio:
WBRU-FM
Miscellaneous:
High School Variety Show
Teachers' freedom of speech (2)
State law on prayer in public schools
Student's freedom of speech
Ads for abortion clinics

Doonesbury
National Lampoon

Films:
Caligula
Dressed To Kill
Deep Throat
The Devil In Miss Jones
Behind The Green Door
Obscene films in gereral(2)

TV:
Death Of A Princess
Freedom Road
Witness for Hire
Miscellaneous:
Massachusetts statute
Nude Photos of inmate's wife
Gag order (2)
Billboards(2)
Priestly advice
cameras in court(2)
FBI records(3)
State and community records(3)
Tapes on abortion and contraceptives
state law
Family planning exhibit
Nude go-go dancing
Political signs in window of woman's house

Aside from common materials under censorship attack (i.e. books, newspapers, and films), this study includes many state, federal and local materials.

TABLE VII
DISPOSITION OF ATTACKS

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Successful	2	Successful	14
Unsuccessful	7	Unsuccessful	9
Partially Successful	4	Partially successful	6
Not known when reported	6	Not known when reported	8

Table 7 indicates considerably fewer successful censorship attempts as compared with the previous study, even if the shorter time span for the second study is taken into account. In educational Institutions there were only two successful cases as opposed to ten in the previous study, and in non-educational institutions only fourteen as opposed to the previous twenty-three. There could be many reasons for the decline in successful censorship attempts. Massachusetts residents may have become more educated and accepting to the belief of the need for an unimpeded flow of ideas. Or perhaps Massachusetts censors have become wary after Sonja Coleman's successful stand. Whatever the reason, thedecline is a positive sign for librarians. Perhaps with future studies, reasons may become more defined.

Through the figures presented it appears that Massachusetts residents have become more concerned with individual rights to freedom of speech and expression, as well as freedom of information and the public's right to know. Political censorship and court actions have been the prominent figures in this study. It is hoped that the people of Massachusetts will continue to defend their rights. Having access to government, state, and local records is important, but at the same time it must be determined how much access can be allowed before the information becomes an infringement on an individual's privacy.

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